



# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

October 27, 1998

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Helena, MT 59620-0701

Environmental Quality Council  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
Fisheries Division  
Endangered Species Coordinator  
Nongame Coordinator  
Missoula Office

MT Environmental Information Center  
Montana Audubon Council  
North Powell County Conservation District  
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Helena  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena  
Montana State Library, Helena  
State Historic Preservation Office, Helena  
Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 878, Lincoln, MT 59639  
Jon Krutar, 4981 Highway 200, Ovando, MT 59854  
Phill Brumit, 5068 Snowy Mountain Drive, Winnemucca, NV 89445

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In September, you received a draft environmental assessment (EA) of a proposal prepared for the Future Fisheries Improvement Program to restore fish habitat on a one mile segment of the Rock Creek drainage located approximately 18 miles west of the town of Lincoln. The proposal calls for enhancing spawning, rearing and adult habitat in the Rock Creek drainage by adjusting channel morphology within over-widened portions of the stream, adding large woody debris and boulders for channel diversity, planting woody riparian vegetation and appropriately managing for livestock grazing within the riparian corridor.

Two changes were made in the draft document following a public review period. These changes are presented in the attached Decision Notice. Please consider the Draft EA and the Decision Notice, with the listed modifications to the EA, to be the final version.

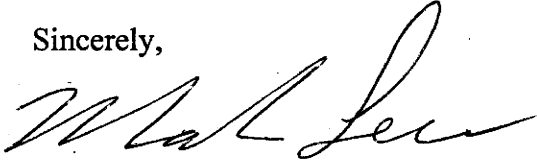
It is my decision to proceed with providing funding through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program for the Rock Creek Restoration Project. I find there to be no significant impacts associated with this action and conclude an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted.

~~Louise Clark~~ Powell

The completed EA and the response to comments included in the attached Decision Notice are an appropriate level of analysis.

Thank you for your interest and involvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Lere". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Mark Lere  
Program Officer  
Fisheries Division

**DECISION NOTICE**  
**Rock Creek Channel Reconstruction and Fishery Restoration Project**  
**Prepared By**  
**Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks**  
**October 21, 1998**

**I.     Proposal**

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to provide funding through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program to restore one mile of channel within the Rock Creek drainage, located approximately 18 miles west of the town of Lincoln, to re-establish migratory corridors for native fish between the North Fork of the Blackfoot River and headwater reaches of the watershed and to provide improved spawning and rearing habitat for trout.

**II.    Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)**

MEPA required FWP to assess the potential consequences of this proposed action for the human and natural environment. The proposal was detailed in an Environmental Assessment (EA) completed by FWP September 3, 1998. The 30-day comment period for this EA ended October 5, 1998.

Issues raised during the public comment period on the EA are addressed in the Comments section of this Decision Notice. Modifications to the Draft EA are listed at the end of this Decision Notice. The Draft EA and Decision Notice, with the listed modifications to the EA, will serve as the final document.

**III.   Summary of Public Comment**

As of October 5, 1998, FWP had received one written comment and one phone comment from a single individual during the public comment period. No other comments were received. This individual expressed general support for fisheries improvement projects proposed for Rock Creek, but expressed concern over two issues.

**Issue 1. The proposed removal of an existing earthen berm will adversely affect water rights and property rights.**

**Response:** The concern over water rights and property rights may be valid. The proposed restoration project would not be affected if the berm for this old impoundment remained untouched. As a result, FWP proposes to modify the draft EA such that the existing berm will not be altered in any manner during the course of completing the proposed work.

**Issue 2. The proposal to construct a series of wetland ponds on the southern unnamed tributary will adversely impact water temperatures in Rock Creek.**

**Response:** The wetland created by this proposed project would provide several functions related to the restoration of the Rock Creek fishery. The primary purpose of the wetland development is to serve as the principle borrow area for the stream restoration project. A secondary purpose for the wetland is to mitigate potential adverse impacts from upstream land use activities by acting as a sediment trap. Finally, the wetland development may improve surface flows by raising the groundwater table.

Pond development commonly can influence temperatures in downstream waters. For this proposal, the wetland development project is located in a degraded unnamed tributary at the interface between intermittent surface flow and groundwater flow. The proposed project is expected to raise the local groundwater table and thereby increase surface flows. Because groundwater temperatures generally range between 36 and 44 degrees F, increases in the contribution of groundwater toward surface flows are expected to offset any warming associated with pond development. As a result, existing stream temperatures are expected to be maintained.

Monitoring on Rock Creek during 1998 by FWP revealed that, from late May through September, water temperatures averaged 51.6 degrees F, and maximum and minimum water temperatures were 62.5 and 41.4 degrees F, respectively. FWP proposes to modify the Draft EA by making a commitment to monitor water temperatures both upstream and downstream of the restoration site following completion of the project. If monitoring indicates that the created wetland is adversely affecting water temperatures in Rock Creek, FWP would modify or fill-in the created ponds to insure existing water temperatures are maintained.

**IV. Modifications to the Environmental Assessment**

The following modifications have been made to the September 3, 1998 Environmental Assessment:

1. The existing berm will not be altered in any manner during the course of completing the proposed work.
2. Water temperatures both upstream and downstream of the restoration site will be monitored following completion of the project. If monitoring indicates that the created wetland is adversely affecting water temperatures in Rock Creek, FWP would modify or fill-in the created ponds.

**V. Decision**

After review of the proposal and the corresponding comment, it is my decision to proceed with providing funding through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program for the Rock Creek

Restoration Project. The action will benefit the fishery of Rock Creek and the Blackfoot drainage.

I find there to be no significant impacts associated with this action and conclude that an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. The completed EA and the response to comments included in this Decision Notice are an appropriate level of analysis

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Lere', written over a horizontal line.

Mark Lere, Program Officer  
Habitat Protection Bureau  
Fisheries Division